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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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UNWORTHY PURSUITS.

“To what purpose is this waste?”—**MATT. xxvi. 8.**

The scene of which this is a part occurred within a few days of our Master's decease, at Bethany, not far from Jerusalem. It was in the house of one Simon. At the table where they were sitting (for it was a kind of feast or entertainment) sat Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. Curiosity brought throngs of people to see him, as well as to see the Saviour. While they were thus sitting (or reclining, if they adopted the Oriental mode), a woman came behind Jesus and broke upon him an alabaster flask containing very precious spikenard ointment. This ointment was made in the far East, and was brought as an article of commerce to all their Western cities. It is called a “box” in one place, giving the idea of a casket; but it was a flask; and when it is said that it was broken, we are not to understand that it was broken to pieces, but that for some reason or other probably the neck was broken open or off, and that then it was poured upon the head of Jesus, and upon his feet. We are not familiar with any such custom as was universal in the East; for ointment was an article, not only of very great value, but of universal employment in ways which are altogether dead to us. We employ it still, but only as an occasional luxury. Such, however, was the prevailing custom in the East; and it had a reason in that rapid evaporation which took place from the skin in that torrid clime. Nor were the personal habits of the people in that day, as they are now at this time in many parts of Southern Europe, so

cleanly and pure that they could bear to stand in their own individual perfume. There might be, therefore, good reason for hiding any disagreeable scent of the body which might exist. So ointment was served to guests, and to persons of distinction especially. It was generally put upon the head. To anoint the feet, which usually were washed, as a matter not of honor but of convenience, was to perform the washing not only, but to perform it with signal honors attached.

Ointments were employed also as memorials. For a time they were employed likewise in ritual service. You will perhaps recollect that an almost exact apothecary's receipt was given by Moses for the manufacture of the ointment which was to be put upon the tabernacle, upon the vessels, upon the candlesticks, and upon the priests. It was made a penal offense for any man to compound that ointment. The making of some kinds of ointment then stood in the same relation that the uttering of coin does now. The government makes the coin, and it is a penal offense for any man to make it. The government reserved to itself the privilege of making certain kinds of consecrating oil. They were not allowed to be made or used by anyone who might choose to make or use them; they belonged to the sanctuary and the priesthood.

The same was true of art in the Orient. It was dedicated to religion. It was against the law for individuals to have pictures or statues in their houses. These things belonged in the temples and to the gods—not to men.

Now, in the scene of which we are speaking, Mary (for it was Mary), to testify her affection for Jesus, among the last acts that she had the privilege of performing toward him brought this precious flask of ointment, and poured it in part upon his hair, and in part upon his feet.

We are not to suppose that it was anything like such a flask as we associate with the oils which we serve upon our tables. It was more like those very small flasks which yet are sent out by the perfumers. So the quantity was not excessive; and the greatness of its price arose from its fineness.

The effect of this act was striking. We have three accounts of it—one in Matthew, one (brief) in Mark, and one

in John. It is said in Mark that certain among them murmured; in Matthew it is said that the disciples murmured; but in John it is said that Judas, who betrayed him, spoke. Collecting the facts from all these sources, it would seem as though Judas had an eye to commerce in this matter. The thought which he had was, "This is very precious stuff to be used in that way." He did not think of it in the light of love at all. It is not probable that Judas was a man of very fine sentiments; and when he beheld this act of affection and fidelity, he weighed it in the scales of the store, and not in the scales of the sanctuary; and he said, "To what purpose is this waste?" He was shocked; and to this day there are multitudes who are shocked when hundreds and thousands of dollars are sent out of the country to the heathen, and that so much money is spent in churches and in various acts of religious worship. Judas was shocked that so precious an article of commerce as this ointment should be wasted by being poured upon the head and feet of the Saviour; and it would seem that the other disciples were misled in the matter, and that they sided with him. The beauty of the act struck no one of them; and our Master rebuked them all.

There was but once in her lifetime that Mary could bestow upon Jesus any such token of affection. If that moment had gone by, never would there have been another like it. And Jesus said, "Me ye have not always with you: the poor ye have with you always"—for the pretense upon which Judas had condemned this proceeding was that this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor. John rather briefly and curtly says of Judas, "He said this because he was a thief, and carried the bag." It was to have gone into the treasury; and if, as he thought it seemed likely, there was to be a dispersion of this little band, in the scattering he would convey away what was in the bag; and he naturally had an eye to business.

This last emphatic title would seem to do away with the fine-spun theories which would alleviate the guilt of Judas. He was an extremely avaricious man; avarice was his leading trait; he found fault with tokens of affection for

avaricious reasons, and he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Three hundred pence he thought ought to have been saved ; he regarded it as having been squandered on Jesus ; but he sold him afterwards for about sixty pence. This character of Judas, and this delineation of his interior motives, seem to set aside the idea which has been suggested by some, that he expected to sell Christ and then get him back again, so that he would have the money, and nobody would receive any damage. It was altogether an avaricious transaction.

Not only did our Master think this act was worthy ; not only, in other words, did he think the expression of sentiment had the highest value ; but he honored the act by declaring that wherever, in the whole world, his Gospel should be preached, it should be made known what this woman had done. Monarchs, and wise men, and soothsayers, and statesmen and generals—the whole crowd and mob of men who were seeking to make themselves conspicuous—have, with a few exceptions, died, passed from the stage of the universe, gone down and been forgotten ; but this woman's name is fresh, and is as fragrant as was the spikenard which she poured upon the head of Jesus.

Of all the ambitions which men may choose, those services which associate them most intimately with God in this world are the things which will give them the longest remembrance and the greatest honor.

This is the brief account. I have selected it, not so much for the purpose of following out the history, as for the purpose of discussing, in another relation, the question which is here put—namely, “For what purpose is this waste ?” If this ointment had been placed upon the head of Pilate, or of hideous Herod ; if it had been placed upon the heads of the men who conducted the affairs of the Jewish government at that time ; if it had been employed in empty forms and ceremonies, there would have been a waste, and the question of the disciple, now ignominious, would have been honorable and pertinent.

To expend the costliest things in worthiness is no waste. There is nothing too good for friendship ; there is nothing

too good for love ; but to spend valuable things on objects of no consequence or worth is a waste which no man can afford.

The question then arises to-night (and it is the question which I wish to impress upon you as appropriate at the opening of the new year), What have you been expending yourself on ? What are you spending the most precious part of yourself upon ? Are you making waste of the things that are best ? or are you breaking them on the head of Jesus, so that you shall have his approbation ? Such questions follow very closely the analogy which might be drawn from this scene.

I propose, to-night, in a series of particulars, to bring before you, and especially before the younger members of this congregation, those hindrances to a full, manly life which beset them ; the liabilities that they will break their alabaster box on unworthy objects ; and the danger that they will pass by and miss those great ends which ought to take the affections of their heart and the consecrated treasures of their soul.

You will perhaps expect me to speak of those who pour out the most precious elements of their lives upon the most unworthy ends, and who live for the pleasures of the flesh. It is possible for men to live with the supreme object of physical enjoyment who yet live within the bounds of propriety which society requires. A man may be to a certain extent a glutton, or an intemperate drinker, and yet not forfeit respectability. The household that shields a thousand things, and should, also shields a thousand faults and mistakes, as it should. Men may live in their neighborhood and in general citizenship without reproach, and with a reputation even of being kind and good, and yet there may not be one single noble ambition in their life. Men may live so as to be respected by their fellows, and yet not do a single self-denying act, and be utterly devoid of magnanimity. Men may live with a constant reference to what shall please them at the table ; yea, they may go further, and may live under the shelter and secrecy of the household, in such indulgences as shall sap and draw out their very vitality.

There are multitudes of men who die early, and ought

to. They live in such a continuous self-indulgence in things excessive or illicit that the mark of death is upon them almost from the beginning of their lives.

I am not speaking of those outrageous vices and uproarious crimes which the conscience condemns : I am speaking of the conduct of men who slide along not parting company with good society, and who yet indulge themselves physically in every way, from week to week throughout the year, drawing upon the capital of health, weakening their nerves, effeminating their muscles, or rotting their bones ; who are bound to a premature death ; whose sun shall go down at mid-day.

Now, it does not follow that every man who does things which are wrong according to the rigorous schedule of virtue and propriety will hold on therein. I take no extravagant ground or theory as against the undoubted fact that men may do wrong and recover themselves ; but I do say that multitudes of men are so made and are so surrounded that to begin such courses as these, or to continue them with any considerable degree of intensity, is a sure presage of their destruction ; and I do say that if men fall into those self-indulgences which sap the body it may require years and years before they can regain that strength which they should have had during all their life. Often when men have long since repented of their secret sins and forsaken them, the effect of those sins remains. The penalty is frequently felt months and years after the wrong deed is performed. It shows itself in emasculation of the body ; in injury to the nerves ; in a want of contractile energy and productiveness of thought. These are results of evil-doing which not unfrequently go with men to the end of their life. This is the reason why so many hundreds of men, with apparently good constitutions, first begin to grow feeble, then fail of success, and then die prematurely. The secret life of multitudes of men is one that destroys them without destroying their reputation or their respectability.

I therefore say to every young man in this congregation who thinks himself to be in danger, who knows that he is implicated, who feels that he comes within the circle of these

remarks (that circle is large, and I need to go into no further particularization to give to every one of you the knowledge of whether you are included in it or not)—to every such one I say, You are breaking the alabaster box on the head of a beast. You are taking the most precious ointment of your nature, your soul's richest gift, the highest credentials of manhood, those elements which belong to you by virtue of your spirit, and squandering them upon an animal.

There have been critics who would scarcely allow even the great dramatist to depict so exquisite and ludicrous a thing as the conversion of a clown into an ass. An ass's head is placed on the body of a man, and the queen of the fairies, enamored with love, is fondling him, and putting wreaths over his huge ears. The transformation is so unnatural that only the genius of a Shakespeare could carry it out successfully; but he drew from life. There are thousands and thousands of persons who are putting flowers on asses' ears; who are putting the most precious things on the most hideous beasts; who are living for the flesh.

Let me pass to that which in criminal aspects is less fatal, but which in its results is scarcely less fatal—namely, the spirit of self-indulgence. I am not going to speak to-night at all *in terrorum*; I am not going to exaggerate: I should like to speak of the topics under consideration so that I shall have the consent of every young man and maiden that I speak with moderation and common sense. I am not going to speak of self-indulgence in its wasteful and gross and damnable forms: I am going to speak of a far more subtle, and in some respects a far more dangerous, element. There are thousands of young men who have good health, who are well equipped, well endowed, who have an average of good sense, who have sufficient to make them reasonably successful in life, but who rarely succeed. They may achieve a temporary success in the earlier period of their career, when the generous appreciation of youth gives a man a larger opportunity than he has in middle life or old age; but when once they are full grown, and are put upon their own mettle, and are judged by what they are and according to the effects which they can produce, then is seen the waste of their man-

hood; and by the time that they reach the meridian line of life they are faint, feeble, and disappointed, and are swept out, so to speak, and they become the detritus of society—hangers-on, camp-followers, unsuccessful men. Though they start with high hope in their own breast and in the bosoms of their friends, yet they never answer their own expectation nor the expectation of their friends. Thousands there are, far from jails, and far from ignominy, who are weak men, unsucceeding men, whom nobody wants. They roam in crowds throughout the community.

What is the matter with these men? Aside from the reasons which I have stated, there is a reason in the subtle element of self-indulgence. No man should hope to succeed in this world who is not willing to bear as much pain as is necessary to buy the most precious things. Gold that is picked up in the rivers, or that is discovered near the surface of the ground, is very soon exhausted; and the miners in California are now obliged to blast out the solid rock, and put it under the hammer, and grind it to powder, and gather out, by chemical processes, the precious metal. So men work out their successes in life. He who thinks he can accomplish any great end in this world without suffering makes a mistake. He does not understand the fundamental law of existence. We come into existence animals; to be born is a painful thing; and we are to be born again every time that a higher faculty in us gains ascendancy over a lower one; and all the way up from mere animalism to social life is a way of self-denial—that is, of the suppression of the lower to give growth to the higher; and so it is in rising from one plane to another, from the lowest to the highest.

Society is so organized, that the same thing takes place in the large sphere that takes place in the individual sphere; and the reason why Christ says to men, "Take up your cross and follow me," is not that there is anything intrinsically good in pain, but that the way to work out higher qualities is to put the lower ones under such restraints that they will suffer—is to put the bridle on the lower faculties, and hold them in, and when they are impatient still hold them in.

Now, let a young man begin life with this feeling

“I desire no unlawful pleasures; I want no wassail; I am not desirous of any riotous indulgences; I am not tempted in overmeasure in the direction of passions and lusts; and yet, it is pleasant to rise late in the morning, and it is gratifying to find everything just as one wishes it at the breakfast table, and it is pleasant to read the newspaper without a sense of urgent necessity pushing one out of doors. There is no great harm in that.” No, there is no great harm in it. To go about your business at ten, or eleven, or twelve o’clock, and have an occupation which shall not in overmeasure exhaust you, and attend to such duties as are rather agreeable on the whole, and shirk all those that are disagreeable, or that carry with them any pain—this is natural; it is no vice, no crime; it is simply seeking present pleasure; it is a mode of being happy at each moment by dodging severe duties, and hard things, and difficult tasks: but it is self-indulgence; it is indulging self; and it violates the great economic laws of God by which men who mean to be *men* must train, drill themselves to disagreeable things.

Let all begin life with this ideal: “Above all let me have aspiration; I am a child of God; I have in me an impulse of ambition.” [Blessed be the man who has ambition! Woe be to the man who has no ambition! He who has no ambition is as dough that has no life and is dumpy.] He that feels, “I am of God; I came from him and am to go to him again; life is before me, and I am willing to pay the price, whatever it may be, of succeeding in a noble way; and I am willing to rise early, and toil late, and take hardness and fatigue and long exertion of every kind; I will not spare myself; I will do the thing that I ought to do, irrespective of my enjoyment”—that man has a charter of success in him. But a man who says, “I have the testimony of my conscience that I am a good man; I mean to do right; I never intend to do anything wrong; but I like to sit down in sunshiny spots, I like to go where flowers are, I like to be in pleasing company, I do not like to go where people are who look down on me, so I do not go where my superiors are; I like to be with people that flatter me, so I go where my inferiors are; I am willing to work for a living, but not in things that are not

respectable"—a man that is all his life thinking of pleasant things, and delightful places, and easy ways, and that which will lift him up and give him prematurely what no man ought to seek except as the result of continued and honest exertion, the fruit of equity, of fundamental justice—such a man is breaking his alabaster box unworthily. No man should want anything for which he has not given an equivalent, a *quid pro quo*; and every man who undertakes to live an easy life by seeking pleasant things in pleasant ways is a self-indulgent man; and his self-indulgence is such as causes him to pour his precious ointment on objects that are unworthy.

Parents, think of these things. It is not necessary to make your children rude. It is not necessary that your children should have artificial self-denials; but in rearing your children courage, hardihood, and manhood are indispensable. That is one of the reasons why it is so blessed to be born poor, and in New England. We were born to nothing. We were swaddled and laid on a rock. We had winters that meant business, and summers that were penurious except in glory, and soil that would give nothing back except what was first given to it. All nature was organized on the rigorous pattern of justice. So men, pushed into life poor, but bound to live comfortably, took the right road to it; they took it out of themselves. They rose early. I think since the world began there never were so many hours put into life in each day as were put into it by every man, woman and child in New England, until after forty or fifty years, when, worn thin by toil, men and women looked like tools—like chisels. And the result is that New England has become a fountain of influences exerted on all this great commonwealth, giving to it largely its institutions and fundamental economies, social, political and religious. It is a source of commercial impulse. It is an organizing power. Not that there are no brains out of New England; but, taking the community comprehensively, New England has influenced the nation and the world. The undertone may not be heard, but it is felt. As here the thirty-two foot pipe of the organ does not sound so obviously as the sharp and screaming flute,

and yet is felt under all the rest of the notes ; so the grand undertones of growth and expansion through America came from New England ; and they came from New England because there were men there who did not count personal comforts the best things in life, but who counted the rearing of great households of children in virtue and industry as worth suffering for. They had a high ambition, and they were willing to bear the pain and penalty necessary to work out that ambition.

To every young person, therefore, I would say, While I warn you against vices and seductions which are injurious to life, there is a more insinuating and subtle and dangerous self-indulgence which will lead you to seek present pleasure at the expense of manhood and prosperity. Beware of it.

Another danger of waste is that by which men live, not in the light of everlasting principles and truths, but in the light of influences that are transient among their fellow-men. How widely these influences are spread you will not perhaps at first consider.

You are accustomed to say, some of you, "I do not care what people think of me, I am going to do what is right." The disposition to do what is right is very well ; but to say that you do not care what people think of you is not very well. When a man says he does not care for the opinion of the wise, the experienced and the good, he is in a bad way. He is either degraded, unmanly, or reckless ; and in either case the place where he is is bad to be in. We ought to care for men's opinions. But all opinions are not alike. Every man should sort them. Because I go into a shop containing ten thousand little tinsels and gewgaws, all manner of childish things, and despise them, it does not follow that I despise traffic or merchandise. Because I do not believe in gilt, it does not follow that I do not believe in gold. And in the matter of the opinions of men, every man should have some standard by which to judge of them, and sort out those that are worthy of consideration ; but no man can afford to ignore the opinions of those who are around about him. The tendency to regard men's opinions is one of the most civilizing of all the tendencies in society. It might not be to the loft-

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iest spirits ; but we are not the loftiest spirits, and therefore we are medicated by other agencies and influences.

On the other hand, bending to the influence of men indiscriminately leads to ten thousand mischiefs. When youth go out into life, if they have an excessive addiction to please men, they seek to adopt those things which pass current in society. Hundreds of young men endeavor to please those with whom they associate by conforming their opinions to the opinions of those that they think are popular. They are not industrious enough to investigate, they are not independent enough to come to an opinion of their own, or they are not honest enough to avow opinions that are unpopular ; and in either case the adoption of opinions for the purpose of meeting the supposed wants of society is unworthy of true manhood.

Conformity of belief, infidelity when it is fashionable to be infidel, liberality when it is fashionable to be liberal, and rigor when it is fashionable to be rigorous—this is an unmanly and dangerous use of one's self ; and yet more unmanly and dangerous are the ways in which men attempt at the beginning of life to stand high by reason of false show—by which they seek to be estimated by appearances instead of realities.

A young man's parents are rich. He has exhibitions of wealth upon his person. It is not a crime. It may not even be a weakness. He may be a participator of his father's wealth, and may be beholden to the household, and may be carrying out the ideas of his parents in the display which he makes of his possessions. I hold that it is right for a man to amass wealth, and to use it upon himself and upon his children. I hold that it is right for a man, having amassed wealth, to employ it in making his household beautiful in the eyes of the community. This, within due bounds, is as proper a use of his means as the establishing of a hospital or any other benevolent institution. But hundreds and thousands of men who come from parents that are not rich try to make people believe that they are rich, or seek to live as though they were rich.

Young men come from the country to the city. They

know perfectly well that their whole future depends upon their industry. They have so small a recompense that they can scarcely maintain what is called "respectability." They are unwilling to seem to be humble workers. They are unwilling to wear clothes such that, people looking at them, say, "He is poor." They are unwilling to practice frugality, though they know that frugality is the indispensable virtue in their condition. They are unwilling to say, "I cannot go on that pleasure expedition; I will not go without the money, I have it not, and will not borrow it, I can not beg it, and I certainly will not steal it." They are ashamed to say that. They are afraid of their companions. They are unwilling, if it has pleased God to affiliate them in matrimony with as big a fool as themselves, to live according to their means. They are going to housekeeping, and they must live as their sort live; and being without the means, or the prospect of the means, they cast themselves upon that current which fools call "luck." They adventure upon this heinous dishonesty because they want to be among "respectable people."

I honor the man who has been brought up with the comforts of life, whose father's house has been sufficiently endowed for all comforts, yet who is not rich, when he goes down to the anvil, if need be, or the loom, or the spade, or any lower occupation, and has a personal pride which leads him to say, "I will found my own fortune. I am willing to take all the responsibility. I am determined that I will hold in till I can afford these things."

I think there is not, this side of the stars, a more beautiful sight than that of a maiden whose father has brought her up with lavish indulgence yielding to a great and noble love, and giving her hand to a child of poverty; they begin at the bottom and toil together, she as sweet as the flowers, and as fragrant, and willing to wait and bear till he and she can work their way up to competence. God's angels, in large bands, and from their own pleasure, wait on such; but sorrowful is the mission of the angel that waits on the other sort.

Especially in great cities the temptations are innumerable; and when I see in a man the ability to stand on just

what he is; when I see honorable shame in a man—not shame to be thought poor, but shame to be thought insincere, the shame of dishonesty in every form; when I see a love of truth and uprightness by which a man takes his joy in expectancy of what will come by and by as a reward of well-doing—when I see this, I need no prophet's endowment to enable me to predict that the results of his life will be gratifying and praiseworthy; but when I see men putting on airs, boasting of what they can afford, indulging in all manner of luxuries, entertaining their country friends in the most expensive ways, taking them to Delmonico's because it would not be the thing and would not do to take them to a cheap place, and doing it while they are not able to pay their washerwoman, their tailor and their landlord; when I see them smoking the most costly cigars, and attending the most fashionable parties—I am ashamed of the whole rabble rout of vulgar men of this stamp! They are dishonest scullions! There are men in Sing Sing that are more honest than they are. They will not break open their neighbor's house and rob him of his goods, but they will appropriate in the most despicable ways what belongs to others. I think sneak thieves are bad enough, and Sing Sing is the right place for them; but there ought somewhere to be a place worse than Sing Sing for such men as I have just been describing.

I make these remarks, not in wantonness or extravagance; but I would that I could say something that would shame thousands of young men who have nobody out of the church whom they respect to tell them these things. You do respect me; you know that I will not lie to you; and I would that I might in telling the truth strike the key-note which should put you upon an investigation to see whether the ambition of your life is worthy of yourselves—whether you are not building on *seemings* and not on *realities*.

Be true, honest and fair, and have nothing that you are not willing to pay the price of. If you want pleasure of respectability or repute, wait till you earn it. It is not a shameful thing to be poor; but it is a shameful thing to be poor and make believe that you are rich.

This takes close hold of another subject, namely: In pursuing the great ends of life you may be redeemed from a thousand petty vices and weaknesses if you put before yourself an ambition of wealth or an ambition of power; I would not dissuade you from that: yet there is a liability to danger in that direction. Men may know that they are right in saying, "I am willing to give my time, my strength and my thought to the acquisition of honest property, and to the acquiring of an honorable place among men; I am perfectly willing to take all the expense and suffering which is required in doing it." Now, provided this includes, as its central idea, the thought that the only real success is that which carries with it true manhood, I have not a word to offer, except to give you Godspeed, and encourage you on your way. You will make mistakes, and you will fall here and there: but be of good cheer; no man is perfect; every man stumbles; but when a man has stumbled, it is his duty to get up again, and move on, and not go back, nor sit down to cry where he fell. You must expect that you will commit many blunders, and do many foolish things; but beware, while you are seeking these very worthy ends, of the organized prosperity of your life, lest you forget that manhood is the condition of enjoying that prosperity.

I can recall in my mind's eye several wretches. "Do you mean criminals?" No, sir—oh no. "Do you mean vicious men?" Oh, no, sir. "Do you mean paupers and outcasts?" No, no. I mean merchants and others, who had made all the money they wanted, and got all the honor they wished for, but in whose face there was not a line of joy. They were unhappy. They did not rest well at night, and they did not rest well in the daytime. They went about all the time like one who says, "Who shall show me any good?" I have seen men whose life had been exteriorly a perfect success, but who had not manhood; who never lived in their reason except as a kind of workshop; who never lived in their moral nature; who stultified their higher faculties and disdained them, so that when they had achieved exterior success they were not successful at all.

What is the use of a man's building his house of marble,

and frescoing every wall, and making the most extravagant outlay in order that everything may be beautiful to the eyes, and then going in blind? What is the use of a man's spreading his table with the most opulent abundance of the choicest viands, and then sitting and groaning with his foot on a chair with the gout so that he cannot touch a thing? The only true condition of earning these things is that you shall be in a state to enjoy them when you have earned them. Men forget that manhood is the fiber from which enjoyment comes. A mean man cannot be happy. A selfish man cannot be happy. You shall see prosperous men who have lived selfishly all their lives, and who are not happy, fumbling about to do benevolent things here and there, hoping that there will be a rebound of happiness; but they are not happy. They do not know how to be happy.

Why, when a man has spent his whole life putting out taste because taste did not pay, putting out sympathy because sympathy made his pocket spring a leak, putting out conscience because conscience restrained him and prevented his working simply for his own selfish interest, putting out manhood because manhood was a spendthrift quality; when a man has spent forty years making the anvil and the loom serve him, making the plow scour itself bright for him, making every ship come in for him, and he is bloated like a spider—he is nothing but a huge spider swinging backward and forward, and watching for its prey. You might play Beethoven's symphonies to a spider till doomsday, and it would not care for them. It would rather have a fly any time!

There are hundreds and thousands of men who are magnificent outwardly, but who are penurious inwardly; and they are unhappy; they wish and try to do something that shall correct the mistake of their past lives; but it is too late, and whatever they do, happiness does not come to them. Outwardly they are great successes, but inwardly there is nothing of them.

Now beware, young men. Do not burn up those very feelings out of which you are to extract your happiness. If a harper on his way to the king's palace to sing his epic and

get his coronation should busy himself on the road in cutting his harp-strings, one after another, and using them to lead his dog with, or to play with his child, or to fix his harness with, so that when he reached the king's palace he would have no strings to his harp, he would be like thousands of men who are building up their outward lives at the expense of the sentiments of love, of fidelity, of friendship, of conscience, of aspiration, of magnanimity, of hope, of faith, of devotion, of reverence, and of belief in immortality.

Hence I bid you beware not to spend your whole life in building up external prosperity, forgetting that you must build up on the inside just as fast as you build up on the outside.

Let me say one word more than this, and in this immediate connection—that is, In making yourself prosperous, and looking forward to enjoyment, beware of seeking that enjoyment in single directions only. It is bad for one man to have only religious enjoyments. It is bad for another man to have only literary enjoyments. It is bad for another man to have only musical enjoyments, and for another man to have only political enjoyments, and for another man to have only mechanical enjoyments. God made man on a very large pattern. He did not put his enjoyment in only one spot; he distributed it through many faculties; and it is a part of every man's just education that he should accustom himself, from his youth upward, to enjoy himself on as broad a scale as possible; so that if sickness should stop up one source of enjoyment, and bankruptcy another, and other misfortunes others, there would always be enough left. Oftentimes persons who have but one source of enjoyment come to such a pass that, this being lost, they have no other resource.

The spider might instruct us about that. If you take a microscope and examine his web-spinning apparatus, you will find that there are some twenty holes through which the web comes out to make one cord; so that if one hole is stopped up, there are nineteen left. If another is stopped up, there are eighteen left; and it is not likely that they would all be stopped up at once.

Now, when you are building your web of joy, spin it out of as many holes as possible. See to it that you have enjoyment in meditation and in recreation. Enjoy wisdom, and also enjoy folly. I pity the man who cannot get down and talk fairy stories, and roll on the floor with children, and listen to their chatter. Men are afraid that they will forget their dignity; but it will do them good to bend themselves once in a while. It is not necessary that you should be starched up all the time. You ought to keep yourselves limber, and in sympathy with common life. It is right to live for taste and beauty, among other things. Indulge even in laziness, sometimes, if you will only call it leisure. Live for things high and low. Broaden yourself. Multiply the sources of your enjoyment. Then, by and by, when trouble drives you from one resource to another, and from that to another, you will be like men in old-fashioned cities with citadels on the highest points, so that when the city was sacked the garrison could retreat thither and be safe. Have faith in God and in immortality, which stand highest, so that when trouble drives you from one fortification to another and another and another, there will still be this fastness that cannot be stormed and cannot be blown down.

If I were to follow out all the heads that I have marked; if I were to circumnavigate the sphere of humanity, and point out all the shoals and rocks that I think of, the night would not suffice. I must perforce pause here, not completing my plan, but leaving it unsymmetrical.

We are just beginning, my dear friends, to tread on the soft, virgin days of the new year. Not the snow that falls upon the ground is freer from stain than is the year upon which we are now entering. What that year is to receive which is now opening like the white paper to the type, I do not know; I do not want to know; but it is for you, it seems to me, to-night, to look back just enough to ascertain what the lines of your adventure have been hitherto. It is for you to form some estimate of what your character is. It is for you to determine whether you have lived worthily; whether you have rightly improved the precious gifts which God gave you in your reason, your affection and your moral sense; whether

you are not in danger of squandering them unworthily; whether you are likely to shed the precious contents of your alabaster box on the head of the Redeemer. And it is for you, looking forward upon the threshold of this new year, to form some wise purposes. Let me ask you, Have there not been forming about you, for a great while, secret personal habits which are destroying your life, and which you have meant to break away from? And will you not, to-night, take the beginning of the year to carry your resolution into effect? When you do it, it must be an act most decisive. Is it not the time to-night to act? Is there nothing in your life that you mean to cut off? How many of you say, "Let the new year stand between me and my wrong doing"? What shall the things be that you will cut off? Are there not many social habits that you would do well to rid yourself of? Is there not peevishness, moroseness, obstinacy, that refuses to be entreated? Is there not quarrelsomeness? Are there not troubles in the family? If those who have sat with clenched hands could open them and touch palm to palm in love, and form resolutions of forbearance in the new year, what a good thing it would be!

I appreciate the courtesy by which friends visited friends on New Year's Day; it was a good thing, and I was richly blessed by the abundance of your remembrance in this matter; but is it not a better thing that one should open his heart and make good resolutions—resolutions that slay evils; resolutions that cultivate virtue and piety? Is there anything more acceptable to God, more worthy of entrance upon the new year, more manly or more rational, than that you should take the earliest days of that new year, not carelessly, but with some just judgment of your whole self, of what you are, of your mistakes and your liabilities to weakness, and form a plan of procedure? Include your business if you will. Consider the rectification that it requires. Look at industry, at enterprise, at social relations, at personal moralities, at religious elements. Survey your manhood through and through.

How are you going to bestow yourself for the year that is to come? God has given you most noble affections and impulses and powers. No alabaster box ever carried such

precious ointment as you carry in your soul. Your enthusiasms, your friendships, your esteems, are nobler than anything that was ever compounded of myrrh, and more fragrant than any incense of the orient. You are the incense-bearing plant of creation. God has given you great treasure in yourself. On what are you going to put it this year? How will you spend it? Let that thought go with you. Interpret it to yourself. What will you do, during the coming year, with the most precious thing that a man can possess? Are you as much as you ought to be, with the power committed to you? It is a shame for a man to set up business with five hundred thousand dollars capital, and do a hundred-dollar business. You are set up with an immense capital, and many of you are doing a very small business. It is time for you to enlarge your manhood. It is time for you to think more worthily of God, and better of yourself. It is time for you to make a new start. It is time for you to fire and cleanse your ambition. It is time for you to confirm your resolutions by definite steps. When the year comes round (and I expect to stand here next year, and preach the Gospel again to you), when we come again to this place, next year, and I speak of these things, or things nearly related to them, I pray that there may be one and another who shall be able to say, with rejoicings, to me, "That appeal which you made lifted me out and up, and I am a different person, by the grace of God, through the truth which you spake to me that night"—for I speak to your reason; I speak to your conscience; I speak to your self-respect.

Oh, sons of God, children of immortality, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, live so that you shall see God, and rejoice with him, forever and forever.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE thank thee, our Father, that we are permitted again to come to this place, long endeared to us—a place of knowledge, a place of inspiration, and a place of rest. We have brought many burdens here, and thou hast rolled them away, we knew not whither. We have brought here multiform sorrows and troubles, and when we looked upon them in the light of thy countenance they were drunk up as clouds before the sun. How often have we drooped, looking downward; and how, by thy touch, looking upward, have we risen up and gone on our way rejoicing! We confess the great mercies with which thou hast blessed us inwardly to be better than all outward good. And yet how many of us have occasion to give thanks for thy providential kindnesses—for the household with its remunerations; for social delights; for friendships; for all the occupations and ambitions of a just and worthy life. But these outward things are only the raiment with which thou dost clothe thine exceeding great blessings which interpret thee, and which fill our souls with a sense of thine ineffable goodness, and gentleness, and sweetness, and mercy. For if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven know how to give us good gifts! If we know what things are beautiful, how much more wonderful is the sense of beauty in our God! If we know what is the beauty of gentleness and of kindness, what wonderful proportions must gentleness and kindness take on in the heart of the Infinite. If we know that it is more blessed to give than to receive, what must be the wonder of thy generosity! If we appreciate and rejoice in the sight of magnanimity as it exists among men, we have seen but the far away signs and tokens of it. It dwells in its grandeur only with God. We admire all fortitude and all fidelity; but what are these qualities as we see them, compared with what they are as thou seest them? How we love loveliness! But what is our love of loveliness compared with that in thee by which thou lovest loveliness, and yet thou canst take up into the scope of thy being those that are full of imperfections and transgressions? We pray, O Lord, that we may have evermore before us a worthier conception of what thou art. Ceasing to strain the imagination, and to expand thee, and to feel that thou art great by mere extension, by power, or by knowing, may we learn to think that thou art great, as thou thyself dost, because thou art good, and merciful, and long-suffering, and slow to anger, and abundant in the forgiveness of transgression. We pray that we may live more and more in the emancipating faith of God's goodness to us for his own sake, for reasons that are in his own nature, so that we may not forever measure our desert, and apportion to ourselves hope by reason of what we find ourselves to be, discouraged on the one side and conceited on the other. We pray that we may feel that we live in thee, so great is the scope of thy being, and so inclusive of all things needful for the highest life. We pray that we may realize that we dwell in thee; and may we rejoice in thee. And we pray that our realization of

thee may give us confirmation of faith. May we from day to day think that we stand, not in our own strength or wisdom or goodness, but in the loving kindness and mercy and wisdom and power of our Father who art in heaven.

We thank thee that thou hast convoyed us through another year. We thank thee that thou hast planted our feet on the threshold of a new one. Grant us to-night those inspirations, those providential surroundings, by which we may go forward severally according to thy will in the year that is before us. We pray that thou wilt inspire to-night seriousness in every heart. May every one review his life, and know whether he has turned it to the most profit. We pray that thou wilt inspire ambition in the young, and grant that men may not throw themselves vilely away, nor undervalue the preciousness of that which has been committed to their charge.

We beseech of thee, O God! that thou wilt grant a blessing to rest upon all the families that are represented here to-night, and upon all the individuals that are gathered together, according to their several necessities. Wilt thou stay up those who are weak. Wilt thou comfort those who are in any manner of affliction. Wilt thou give clear knowledge or understanding to any who are in doubt, or who cannot perceive the truth, or the way of duty. Wilt thou give impulse to those that lie becalmed, and are making no voyage. Grant to all according to their several circumstances that Divine gift, that Divine influence, that Divine leaning, which shall bring them on their way this year more and more richly than in any year of their past lives.

Bless, we pray thee, all the churches of this city, and of the great city near us. Unite them in a common zeal, and in a common consecration to Christ.

We pray for our nation, and for all the nations of the habitable globe—for those that are in darkness, and for those upon which the full light of Christianity shines. We pray that the time may speedily come when all the promises and prophecies shall be fulfilled, and when the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.
Amen.

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

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